

NOTES ON COLLECTING SHELLS IN JAMAICA.

BY CHAS. T. SIMPSON.

About the first of December, Mr. John B. Henderson, Jr., of Washington, and the writer visited the island of Jamaica for the purpose, principally, of collecting land, fresh-water and marine mollusks. We called on Mr. Henry Vindryes, a veteran collector and conchologist in Kingston, inspecting his magnificent set of Jamaica Shells, and receiving from him every possible courtesy and many useful notes as to localities.

As our stay was to be limited to some three weeks, we were anxious to begin work at once, to actually put our hands on some of the land snails in their homes. We hired a cab with a good natured darkey for a driver, and a miserable, little, bony horse, of uncertain color, and started for the suburbs, in the direction of Rockport with our eyes strained to catch sight of the splendid *Orthalicus undatus*, which we were told we might find on our way. The poor little horse, which wobbled about first from one side of the road to the other as if in search of snails, but probably from sheer exhaustion, was suddenly brought to a standstill without much exertion by the driver, who exclaimed as he pointed his whip to some low trees on the south of the road "Da de snail you want massa." I think we had all observed them at the same moment, and with a shout like boys we were out of the cab and racing across the road, through a terrible hedge of wild pinguin in less time than it takes to write it. There they were, great beautiful fellows, variegated with ash color and glossy black, one, a half dozen, fifty, a hundred, in fact without limit! They clung to all kinds of trees and shrubs in the low tangled scrub, and in great numbers to the tall cylindrical Spring Cereus; in almost every case glued by an epiphragm so solid that it was well nigh impossible to dislodge them, and invariably with the spire pointing downward.

When we came out of the woods an hour afterward we were as wet with perspiration as though we had been dipped in water, and covered with every description of sticking burrs; our flesh was lacerated, and our hands dirty and bleeding, for everything in the scrub bears villainous thorns. On the debtor side we had ruined two suits of clothes, and to our credit could be placed over five hundred superb living *Orthalicus*. We had learned a lesson, too,

worth remembering, viz, never wear anything decent when collecting in the tropics.

During our stay we drove around the entire island, visiting every parish. Owing to the worthlessness of our team, the illness of the driver, and the almost incessant rains we encountered on the north side, our opportunities for collecting were greatly diminished.

It was only when we stopped over a day or so at the towns that we were able to get any great amount of material. Strangely enough we found almost no marine species whatever. Occasionally on the rocky beaches we obtained *Neritina virginea*, a few *Littorinas*, *Tectarius* and *Neritinas*, but for miles, in fact along whole parishes, though the road ran near to the sea, and we watched closely, not even a valve was seen.

The lack of marine forms was made up in the abundance of the land snails, and in some cases the fresh water species. In a branch of the delta of Roaring River, under a great breadfruit tree, H. picked up a dead *Hemisimus lineolatus*. Then I looked on the rocky and sandy bottom and found it alive by handfulls, and we met with it in quantities elsewhere.

We kept an eager watch for the great white *Helix aspera*. My friend picked up a single dead specimen on the road near Falmouth, and this fairly turned our heads. We inquired of every darkey from that on, hearing of it often like the *Ignis fatuus*, just a little way out of reach. Near Montego Bay we got a few more dead ones, and again as it was growing dark we discovered a dozen or so on the bushes and vines when we were nearing Savanna la Mar. The next day I started out early for a walk, resolved to find this snail if thorough search would do it. I tramped the whole forenoon and got only a few *Ampullarias*, and two o'clock found me tired, hungry, and thoroughly disgusted, seven miles from our hotel, and uncertain whether to push on to some low hills a mile ahead, or to give it up and go back. My resolve determined me and I went on. The first rounded knoll looked well at a little distance—one learns in a short time to distinguish good from poor localities a long way off. The elevation did not occupy more than half an acre; red clay with decomposed limestone. It was originally a dwarf scrub which had been partly cleaved a couple of weeks before. The first thing I saw was a fine dead *Helix aspera* on the ground, then others, there they lay thickly all around me, bright and fresh, with the animals nicely cleared out by tropic showers, the sun, and swarming insects.

I hardly dared move for fear of stepping on them, and to calm my excitement, and assure myself that it was not all a wild conchologist's dream, I stood still and tried to count a hundred, but when I had got to twenty I saw half a dozen live ones clinging like a string of enormous white beads to a little shrub right beside me, and I quit counting and gathered them in. Then I sat down and without moving I picked up thirty fresh, cabinet specimens. About that time it just began to dawn on me that the great *Lucerna acuta* was as abundant as the *aspera*, and in no time I had my hands full of the fine, big, brown fellows. Afterward I got me eyes focussed down to seeing *Sagdas*, *Helix sinuata*, three or four *Cylindrellas* and as many *Tudoras*, and that under the leaves, and among rubbish there were quantities of small *Glandinas*, *Zonites* and *Microphysas*, that the ground when closely examined was literally bespangled with lovely little *Proserpinas*, that shone in the sun like polished opals.

To my dying day I never expect again to see such collecting unless I revisit Jamaica. Hunger, fatigue, headache, the flight of time were forgotten, and I was only warned that I must return by the fact that the sun was nearly down before I knew it, and that I had an eight mile walk and darkness before me. On a little spot no larger than a city lot, I had taken in a few hours over thirty species of land shells. As I reluctantly tore myself away I took fifteen *asperas* from a small Mango, and on the border of the clearing where some one had bent together a couple of young logwood trees, not as large as my wrist, I picked twenty-five more fully adult and one young one.

Shall I tell how in a narrow limestone gorge of the Rio Cobre near Bogwalk in the talus under a ledge some two rods long we found no less than forty-five species, all living, and nearly every specimen in perfect condition; or how at Mandeville the honey-combed rocks were crowded with lovely *Chounopomas*, rough as chestnut burrs, now H. wild with excitement and regardless of bats, centipedes, scorpions, and poisonous vines wedged himself into a dark cave whose mouth was at least two sizes too small for his body; how he stuck fast, and alone and far from help, could neither get forward or backward for awhile, how he pushed on to be rewarded by finding quantities of *Helix peracutissima* and the great purple *H. jamaicensis*, the latter clinging to each other on the roof like so many stalactites, a snail which, by the way, we had repeatedly been told was extinct! I fear it may be now.

It is enough to say that for the brief time and limited opportunities we had, our trip was a success, and we left with many regrets that we could not spend the rest of the winter on the island, and thoroughly explore it, and collect its inexhaustible treasures.

A LIST OF THE BRACHIOPODA, PELECYPODA, PTEROPODA, AND NUDI-BRANCHIATA OF JAMAICA, LIVING AND FOSSIL.

COMPILED BY T. D. A. COCKERELL.

[Continued from p. 107.]

- Donax denticulata*, L.: Milk River Beach, Pt. Morant, Vendryes Coll. (viv. and foss.).
 [rostratus, Adams: Jay, Cat. Shells, Ed. 1850, but record erroneous, teste E. A. Smith.]
- Dosinia concentrica*, Lam.: Vendryes Coll. (viv. and foss.).
incerta, Verkruzen (MS.?): Paetel, Cat. Conch. Samml., 1890, teste E. A. Smith.
- Ervilia nitens*, Montagu: Vendryes Coll.
- Erycina* sp. Bowden, Vendryes MS. (foss.).
- Gastrochaena chemnitziana*, d'Orb.: Vendryes Coll. (viv. and foss.).
cuneiformis, Spengler: Vendryes Coll.
- Eriophyla lunulata*, Conr.: Kingston Harbor, Vendryes Coll.
 var. *parva* C. B. Ads. Vendryes MS. Cat.
- Inoceramus* sp. Ether. in Sawkins, p. 308 (foss.).
- Leda acuta*, Conr.: Bowden, Vendryes MS. (foss.).
bisulcata, Guppy: Guppy, Geol. Mag., 1874 (foss.).
clara, Guppy: Guppy, Geol. Mag., 1874 (foss.).
corpulenta, Dall: Dall, Bull. 37, U. S. Nat. Mus., p. 44.
illecta, Guppy: Bowden, Vendryes MS. (foss.).
jamaicensis, d'Orb.: Vendryes Coll.
vitrea, d'Orb.: orig. descr., teste E. A. Smith.
- Lima carribea*, D'Orb.: Vendryes Coll. = ? squamosa.
scabra, Born: Vendryes Coll.
- Limopsis aurita*, Brocchi, var. *paucidentata*, Dall: Dall, Bull. 37, U. S. Nat. Mus., p. 42.
- Lithophagus bisulcatus*, D'Orb.: teste E. A. Smith.
caudiger, Lamk.: Rockfort, Vendryes Coll. (as Modiola).